[98] II CARPENTRY.

335 Carpentry plays an important part in the life of the Mongo Negro. The primitive utensils in his house as well as his canoe and his lokole (the Negro telephone with which he spreads his thoughts from village to village) are made of wood.

The making of the canoe and the lokole takes a great deal of work.

The Canoe.

313 396 The following three kinds of wood, namely, (1) Bokeswa, (2) Lifake, (3) Bomposo, make a good canoe, especially Bokeswa. This tree is much sought after because its wood makes a strong, light canoe.

The Negro who wants a canoe goes into the forest, picks out a nice slender tree, brings out his axe, and fells at his leisure the tree he has chosen. He hacks off the unnecessary branches and hollows the tree out in the rough form of the canoe. (Aulema watu: he shapes the canoe.)

[474] He calls some of his friends together, and they proceed, for payment, of course (nothing for nothing, says the Negro), to hollow out the tree.

396 When they have finished hollowing out the tree, the owner of the canoe calls the wongiwa biatu, the proper canoe maker, a heavy man and one of some account among his fellow villagers. This wongiwa biatu gives a nice, slender form to the canoe with his axe, planes it off nicely, and with the help of the esuwa, a small axe, marks off the edge of the canoe with sharp, short, regular grooves.

483 476 Often the Negroes make their canoes hours away from the nearest water. In order to transport it, they place sticks on the ground and draw the canoe over them. In addition to a number of strong men, all the spes patriae [hope of the fatherland] of the village help with this task. They get a mitako as a reward and feel themselves on top of the world.

396 476 The canoe maker is well paid, the price reckoned according to the size of the canoe. Several dogs are slaughtered at the expense of